N.E.C.C.

NEWS BULLETIN
OF THE NEAR EAST CHRISTIAN COUNCIL
"FROM IRAN TO MOROCCO—FROM TURKEY TO THE SUDAN"

AUGUST, 1955

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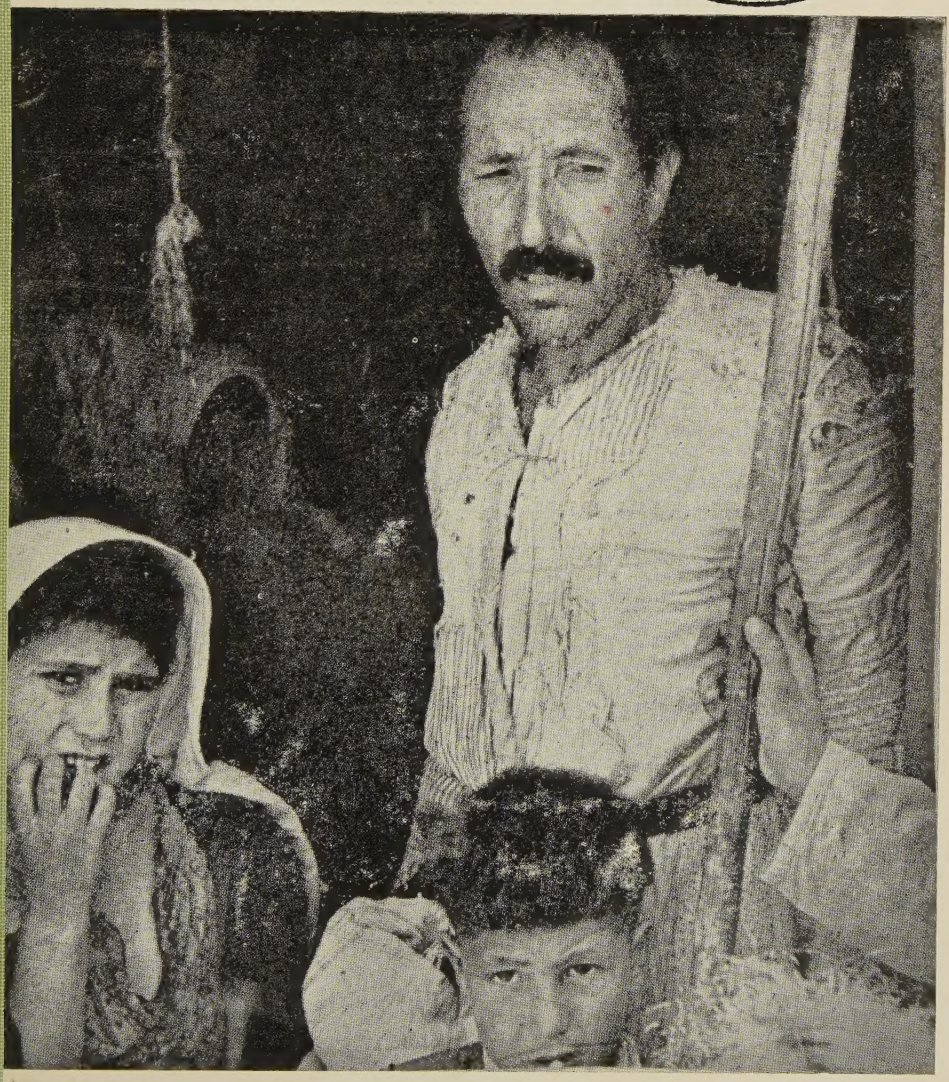

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For the List of Correspondents see the back page of this Bulletin. All news items and reports for publication should be sent to:—

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NEWS BULLETIN OF THE NEAR EAST CHRISTIAN COUNCIL FOR MISSIONARY CORPORATION

Fron Iran to Morocco **From Turkey to the Sudan**

August, 1955

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EDITORIAL

It is difficult to make bricks without straw, and the first appeal of a new editor is for news items and reports for publication in the Bulletin. It is true that on this occasion, as a result of the Triennial Conference of the N.E.C.C., there is more than enough material. Indeed many reports and an appreciation of the work of Dr. E.E.Elder have been held over until the next Bulletin is issued. Some contributors may be disappointed, but it is probably better policy to deal with any problem at some length rather than be satisfied with a scrappy and much abbreviated report.

The Bulletin has a circulation of about one thousand five hundred copies, and the address list has just undergone some revision. It would be a great help to the Editor if he could be given lists of those persons and organizations interested in the Christian problems of the Near East; thus our mailing list could be more thoroughly checked and valuable additions made to it. More copies are available on application either to the Editor or to Dr. Harry Dorman, P.O.Box 235, Beirut, Lebanon.

The Council stands at present in need of two things. The first is increased contributions towards the cost of the work. The statement of accounts presented to the Conference and printed in this Bulletin shows this very clearly. But the Council also needs the prayers of all Christians interested in the work of the Church in the Near East. It has been suggested to the Editor that with subsequent issues of the Bulletin we might send an Intercession Paper printed in both English and Arabic. (Turkish and Persian are really also necessary!). The Editor would be glad to have comments and suggestions in regard to this.

SIMON CALLED PETER

(Each day's session of the recent Triennial Conference of the Near East Christian Council began with a Bible Hour; the speaker was the Rev. Cullen I.K. Story, Principal of the Near East School of Theology, Beirut, and the study of the Apostle printed below is an abbreviation of his three addresses).

For the Christian living in 1955 in the Near East, which is so near to the sacred scenes of the New Testament, a brief study of the life of the Apostle Peter presents many lines of thought in harmony with the general theme of the N.E.C.C. Conference—"Christ Calls the Church to Mission and Unity." Peter came from Bethsaida in "Galilee of the Gentiles" and lived his early life in a Gentile environment, or at any rate in surroundings that must inevitably have been influenced by Gentile customs and Gentile thought. The Christian of 1955 in like manner lives his life against a background that is not exclusively Christian; he has to combat agnostic materialism, Communism, and the teaching of Islam.

"Launch out into the deep..." The command of Christ comes to Peter as it comes to His Church today in an age of challenge and opportunity. Sometimes, through lack of faith and vocation, the Church hesitates as Peter hesitated then. Peter was the expert

fisherman, and he may have thought of Jesus as a skilled carpenter with no specialised knowledge of fishing. We all of us know that we are inclined to resent advice about our own particular work when that advice comes from an outsider. This message comes to us with added force at a time when there is talk of reunion and greater co-operation between the Churches. There is always the possibility of human error! Some weakness in our own Church, in our own approach to a particular problem may have caused the melancholy confession—"We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing".

Peter must have had his doubts, but his obedience is the mark of the dedicated follower. The test of the dedicated follower is not the test that comes at a time when there is every appearance of success; the test that the dedicated follower of Jesus Christ must pass successfully today, as in the days of our Lord's ministry, is the test of obedience to what is certainly inconvenient and may seem unreasonable and almost impossible. The number of converts from non-Christian religions in the Arab World may indeed be small as yet; we may meet with discouragement and opposition. But where God calls, He enables, and the modern dedicated follower is constrained to make the same reply as Peter—"At Thy word I will let down the net." What happened to Peter may also happen to us; the Divine Power may leave the sphere of the abstract and academic, and be presented to us as actual fact. In a day when methods of evangelism are being closely examined and adapted to the needs of an age of transition, it is well for us to remember the comment of a Chinese Christian:—"I note that in the New Testament our Lord spoke about fishermen and fish, shepherds and sheep. I take it to mean that we are to win men to Him either by hook or by crook."

But to be a dedicated follower is not enough. The Bible shows us how Peter the dedicated follower was also the learning disciple. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Peter had not reached the point of full understanding; no disciple reaches that point this side of eternity. Peter and the others are realizing the pull of the tide of adverse opinion, the whispered comments, the hostility of the Rabbis, but God in His goodness has revealed to them a glimmering of the truth. There is all the difference in the world between the hunger of the learning disciple and the curiosity of the casual listener. No beautiful ideas about oecumenical brotherhood can ever replace the necessary loyalty of the Christian to his Saviour. Peter the learning disciple had to

discard some of his ideas, his notion of the Messiah as a nationalist leader. There are preconceived ideas that Peter's modern counterpart must also discard; Christianity is not a means to an end, a panacea for the world's ills. Christianity is an end in itself, for the purpose of a wise and loving God must override all man-made policies. In the words of that great missionary statesman, John R. Mott, "We must be prepared to receive fresh mandates from the ever-creative God."

This being so, the learning disciple is no detached bystander, standing alongside the road and contributing his modicum of applause; like Bartimaeus, when once he has experienced the power of Christ, he must "follow Jesus in the way." And because he is the recipient, to a greater or less extent, of the revelation of God, he must also be the bold confessor; he must make Peter's words his own, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This must necessarily be so because Christianity starts as an experiment and becomes an experience. It is the personal loyalty of the learning disciple that will prevent Christianity from becoming "diffused." In this connection there are some striking words written by Dr. Charles Malik that are worth quoting:— "I find no evidence that this enlightened secularization of our religion was even the remotest intention, let alone the practice, of our Lord or His Apostles or the Saints, or of the Fathers of the Church... The revelation of our hopeless state does not take place in truth except in and through the revelation of its positive salvation in Christ... I pray that the missionary movement will never allow itself to be deflected into purely humanitarian and secular channels... Its task is ... to mediate Jesus Christ Himself, my Lord and the Lord of history, who alone can and does mightily save me every day from the grip of sin and death."

"Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." God has done something in Peter, and the dedicated follower and learning disciple becomes also the transformed witness, in his own person the fulfilment of the prophecy "Ye shall receive power." Personally and individually he had been convinced that the Resurrection was a fact. For Peter this was a psychological necessity, for, if the two on the way to Emmaus were dejected and downcast, for Peter the strain must have been well-nigh unbearable. The Gospels tell us that the meeting between the risen Master and Peter took place before that first Resurrection day ended. In that man-to-man encounter Peter's sin is forgiven and his mind begins its preparation for the task imposed by Jesus, "Feed my sheep." The man who a few weeks before had said, "I

know not the man", speaks on the day of Pentecost with such power about "this Jesus" that he brings to many a new spiritual experience. We are reminded of the well-known story of the two men standing at Niagara Falls. One remarked that this was the greatest example on unused power in the world, but his companion corrected him and said that the greatest example of unused power was the Holy Spirit of God.

The transformation, the change in Peter under the guiding hand of God, is not confined to personal spiritual experience; it extends to a vision of a world won for Christ. He accepts Cornelius and his companions for baptism, and by that very act he discards the idea of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of one nation. Again Peter has to learn. In his vision on a roof-top in Jaffa he hears the command "Rise, Peter, kill and eat," and his immediate reaction is to protest; he says, "Not so, Lord." He had used the same words of protest when Jesus foretold his Passion and when Jesus took the servant's place in the Upper Room and washed the feet of the Apostles. Even so the Christian of 1955 has his lessons to learn before he can claim to be a transformed witness. He must feel the need of the all-prevailing death of a Crucified Saviour, he must keep before him the ideal of devoted Christian service, he must have a vision of a worldwide Church which is the fulfilment of his prayer "Thy kingdom come." For when once the follower has said "Lord", he can no longer say "Not so".

N.E.C.C.

The eleventh General Meeting of the Near East Christian Council was held at the American School for Girls, Beirut, from May 2nd. to May 4th., 1955. The Meetings each day opened with a Bible Hour conducted by the Rev. Cullen I.K. Story; his subject was the Apostle Peter, and a summary of his addresses will be found elsewhere in this Bulletin. The Acting Executive Secretary, Dr. R. Park Johnson, read the roll; all regions were well represented, and there were present experts in every field of Christian missionary activity to give reports on progress since the last Meeting. Among visitors who honoured the Meeting by their presence the following were welcomed by the Chairman: — Dr. Glora Wysner, I.M.C., New York, Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, Rev. Gote Hedenquist, Director of the International Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews, Upsala, Sweden, Dr. Aziz Atiyah of the Coptic Academy of Higher Studies, Cairo, and Dr. and Mrs. Raymond McLain of

the American University, Cairo. Two popular evening Meetings were held in the National Evangelical Church, and these were well attended. On Monday a panel of speakers presented "A Panorama of Christianity in the Near East in 1955"; in this the Protestant Churches were joined by representatives of the ancient Churches of the East—Bishop Cyrus Yacoub of the Syrian Orthodox Church, Beirut, Archimandrite Ignatius Hazim, Principal of the Greek Orthodox College of the Annunciation, Beirut, and Dr. Aziz Atiyah of the Coptic Academy, Cairo. All those present must have left the Church with a clearer idea of what is being done in the name of Christ in the Near East at this time, while the challenge and opportunity of our age was eloquently presented by the various speakers. On Tuesday evening the subject was "Ecumenical Christianity in the World and the Near East" and the two speakers were Dr. Glora Wysner and Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft.

Dr. R. Park Johnson, in the formal business of the Meeting, gave a report of his visits to Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Arabia, Iran and Egypt, and conveyed to those present the decision of Dr. E.E. Elder not to return to the field for further service. Dr. Elder served as Executive Secretary of the N.E.C.C. from 1947 to 1954, and the Meeting unanimously expressed their gratitude to him for his valuable work. Comprehensive reports were presented to the Meeting from the various Regional Councils, and the Reports of Correspondents were received with great interest by those present; these, with the various recommendations resulting from them, will be the subject of articles in this and subsequent issues of the Bulletin. In a discussion of the future Programme of the N.E.C.C., led by Canon Cub'ain, the need for a full-time Executive Secretary was stressed. This idea met with general approval but no specific action was taken until there has been further study of the budgetary and personnel problems involved. Other points raised were closer contacts of the N.E.C.C. with the ancient Churches of the East, the revision of the constitution, a study of the basis of membership and representation in the Council, and the enlarging of the financial support of the Council.

Dr. Glora Wysner led a discussion about the possibility of establishing a Study Centre for the preparation of Church Leaders and Missionaries in the Near East, and spoke of the interest of the I.M.C. in this proposal. The Meeting agreed that a committee should be appointed to assist in the organization and development of the Study Centre, and that the I.M.C. should be asked for their help in finding a leader who will begin a programme on a regional

basis and at the same time study the possibility of further developments. The subjects to be covered by such a Centre would be:— 1. The elements and faith of Islam. 2. A sympathetic understanding of how the mind of the average Moslem works, not so much from the point of view of the scholar or historical student as from the manner in which the man in the street orders his life and thought. 3. A study of the positive Christian message in its relation to modern Moslem thought. The Executive Committee were instructed to draw up a budget for such a Centre and to get into touch with the appropriate authorities of the Anglican Communion with a view to ensuring that their plans were co-ordinated with those of the N.E.C.C.

Officers, representatives, committees and correspondents were elected for a three-year term, and their names will be found printed inside the front and back covers of this Bulletin. It was voted that the N.E.C.C. should request the Syria-Lebanon Mission of the Presbyterian Church to release Dr. Harry Dorman from part of his work so as to enable him to fulfil his duties as Executive Secretary of the N.E.C.C. After votes of thanks to many who had contributed in various ways to the success and smooth running of the Meeting, thankful mention was made of fellow-workers and friends who during the past year had been called to higher service:— Dr. John R. Mott, who was closely concerned with the formation of the N.E.C.C., and Mr. F. Lyman MacCallum of the United Bible Societies. Once again, this Meeting must have given all those present something to think about and many things to pray about and perhaps the most valuable part, as always, was the opportunity provided for Christian leaders of many denominations to meet together in Christian fellowship and discuss their common problems.

Statement of Accounts for the Year, April 1st., 1954, to March 31st., 1955.

RECEIPTS.	L.E.
Balance in Hand, April 1st., 1954	216.050
Contributions from Missions and Churches:—	
American University, Cairo	30.000
Arabian Mission	51.885
Beirut Evangelical Church	5.815
Bible Society (Bible Lands N.)	12.000
Bible Society (Bible Lands S.)	5.000
C.M.S., Egypt	15.000
C.M.S., Jordan	24.375

Edinburgh Medical Mission	9.600
Episcopal Church in Egypt	1.000
Near East Mission, A.B.C.F.M.	145.975
Presbyterian Mission, Iran	74.185
Presbyterian Mission, Syria & Lebanon	58.310
United Mission, Iraq	14.930
(Total — L.E. 448.075)	
Gifts and Donations	32.980
Gifts and Contributions for 1955-1956	23.720
Total — L.E.	720.825

EXPENSES.	L.E.
News Bulletin	142.330
Office, Telephone	12.000
Stenography	21.670
Postage, Stationery	5.975
Meeting of Executive Committee, May, 1954	93.600
Contribution — I.M.C.	37.730
Sundries	8.695
Credit Balance	398.825
Total — L.E.	720.825

Budget for the year 1955-1956 as estimated and approved by the Finance Committee.

ESTIMATED INCOME.	L.E.
From Missions and Churches	520.000
Expected Increased Contributions	250.000
Gifts and Donations	30.000
From Arabic Christian Literature Committee for Bulletin	100.000
Total — L.E.	900.000

ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE.	L.E.
News Bulletin	200.000
Meetings (average of three years)	350.000
Office, Telephone	50.000
Stenography	72.000
Postage, Stationery	35.000
Secretary's Travelling Expenses	125.000

Contributions — I.M.C.	48.000
Sundries	20.000
Total — L.E.	900.000

The following recommendations were approved at the Conference:—

1. That N.E.C.C. action 54-14 be rescinded, and that the Council resume its former custom of paying full travelling expenses for delegates to Meetings. However, the N.E.C.C. welcomes contributions from delegates, Churches or Missions of half or part of their travelling expenses, whenever possible.
2. That in order to increase the income of the Council, N.E.C.C. action 52-22 be amended and restated as follows:— "That while the basis of contributions by Missions and Churches still remains voluntary, the Council estimates that to meet its budgeted expenses it requires from Missions and Churches a sum which would be raised if each Mission contributed on the basis of at least L.E. 1.500 for each Missionary, and each Church contributed on the basis of at least L.E. 1.000 for each 300 communicant Church members. Other institutions and organizations are requested to consider raising their contributions by 50 per cent.

THE CROSS AND THE CRESCENT

(The monthly Newsletters of the Church Missionary Society for May and June of this year dealt with Islam. Written by Dr. Max Warren, the General Secretary of the Society, and based on information derived from many sources, they furnish a considered opinion of the present position. They are reproduced here, in an abbreviated form, with Dr. Warren's permission.)

Islam is more than a creed: it is a way of life. Islam is more than a way of life: it is a very powerful social cement of international significance. Islam is a religion; a pattern of living and a political force. Both as a religion and as a pattern of life it is, at least in many parts of Africa, commending itself today far more successfully than the Christian Church. As a political force it has a greater nuisance value in the present "power" clash than almost any other single factor. Recognizing this, Dr. Warren opens his survey with the very pertinent question — "Do we submit to defeat?"

"We" are the Christians of the West, "we" are the Christians of Asia, "we" are the Christians of Africa, and we have to admit that in the present situation we cannot escape being the object of suspicion to those who dwell in the "House of Islam". There are three reasons for this. First, we are suspect because Christianity is identified with political aggression from the West. This refers not only to the Crusades, but also to much more recent history. In the nineteenth century, when Russia was the protector of Orthodox Christians in the dying Turkish Empire, France the protector of the Roman Catholics, and Britain and America the protectors of the Protestants, any Moslem could be pardoned for assuming the identity of Christianity and imperialist politics. In the twentieth century the Western powers have a record in Moslem eyes which has by no means enhanced their reputation. Here is an inescapable burden which every Christian must carry as he strives to witness for Christ to the "House of Islam".

In the second place Christians are suspect for a very different reason which goes down to the very roots of our understanding of man. Islam treats human life as an undifferentiated totality. Life in the community is legislated for according to traditions which are themselves the pendants of the divine revelation held to have been given to Mohammed. Let us treat this monolithic conception of religion with respect. It harks back to the religion of the Old Testament period and it has a tremendous appeal for many human minds. Nevertheless it follows from such a view of man that the Moslem will assume either that similar, though presumably different, principles guide the alien of another creed with whom he has relations, or, if not, that the alien has no principles. In either case he will be an object of suspicion. We of the West have an idea of man that is radically different from that of the Moslem. Believing in God's gifts of reason and freedom, we see man as a child of God, designed to co-operate with him of free choice. We believe that the right course of action is to be found through discussion and experiment. There are the eternal truths of the Gospel, of course; but the application of them to any particular problem will be guided by God's revelation of His purpose. The Moslem on the other hand is tied down by hard and fast rules. We must, however, recognize that much misunderstanding could be avoided if Christian behaviour more often matched Christian principles.

In the third place Islam claims to be a universal religion, bearing the truth about God and man. It is in its very nature a missionary religion. Christianity is also a universal religion, claiming to bear the truth about God and man, and is also in its very

nature a missionary religion. The Christian is therefore necessarily suspect as seeking to win the Moslem's allegiance to what the Christian believes to be the truth of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. We betray the Moslem and we betray ourselves if we lull to rest his suspicions about our intentions. Our intentions remain. They are "so to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit" that the "House of Islam" will one day find itself part of the "Household of God."

"So to present Christ Jesus" — we must be prepared for an arduous debate on the meaning of that little word "so". To begin with, we must review the apparent apathy of the Christian Church with regard to Islam. We must try to understand the paradox of defeatism and courage, both existing at one and the same time, in so much of the witness of the ancient Churches of the East. Again, we shall have to scrutinize fearlessly both the theory and the practice of modern missions to Moslems as promoted from Europe and America. The debate has indeed been going on for a generation, but there is evidence which would suggest that it is now entering a new phase. Political and economic factors combine to bring the homelands of Islam, the Near and Middle East, into sharp focus for our attention. The tremendous increase in the number of Americans and other Westerners now operating in this area, either in connexion with the oil industry or development schemes or refugee relief, would of itself ensure a wider interest. The conscience of the West is profoundly uneasy over the post-war course of events in the Middle East.

It is, then, no accident that in the year 1954 three events took place, apparently unrelated on the surface, but which were indications of the growing challenge presented by Islam to the Christian Faith. The first of these in point of time was the meeting at Bhamdoun in the Lebanon of an equal number of Christians and Moslems from some twenty-two countries. Meeting under the auspices of the American Friends of the Middle East, their primary object was to establish a mutual understanding between men of sincere, though differing, religious convictions which must be a preliminary to any genuine "conversation". The second was the publication, at present with a strictly limited circulation, of an interim report by the Rev. J. Spencer Trimingham dealing with a journey of survey which he undertook, under the joint auspices of the Church Missionary Society and the Methodist Missionary Society, to study the impact of Islam on West Africa. In some points profoundly disconcerting, this report is already the subject of sustained discussion, and there

will be more discussion when it reaches a wider public. If it has achieved nothing else, it has at any rate ensured a serious debate as to the theory and practice of Christian Missions to Moslems. The third event was a meeting of the new Committee for Missionary Strategy of the Anglican Communion, convened immediately before the Anglican Congress at Minneapolis last summer. A considerable part of the Committee's time was devoted to the Christian witness in the Moslem world.

What is the Moslem world? Geographically it is a great block of territory from Dakar in West Africa to Lahore in Pakistan, from the shores of the Caspian to the great tropical forests of Africa. Psychologically it is the "brotherhood of Islam" which produces a sense of international relatedness of considerable emotional power. Ideologically it is as yet uncommitted; it dislikes Communism, but at the same time has more affinities with Communism than we realize. Politically it is infinitely various; some Islamic states are proud of real independence, others are formally independent but frustrated by political forces outside their control. There is Turkey; the great "heretic" of Islam, committed to N.A.T.O., there is Northern Nigeria, apparently not anxious to become independent too soon.

As a practical step towards the understanding of this very diverse problem Dr. Warren recommends the reading of three books, of which full particulars will be found at the end of this article. In the first, a short study of Islam, Professor Alfred Guillaume conveys something of the spirit of Islam and shows some of the ways in which Islam is adjusting itself to the contemporary world. The second book is an objectively written study entitled "Middle East Survey". The author, S.A.Morrison, was a C.M.S. missionary for thirty-four years in Egypt; fluent in Arabic, he was in intimate touch with political events in this area. The book is a careful appraisal of the forces at work in the Middle East today and gives a good account of the Palestine situation. The third book is "Islam in East Africa" by Lyndon P. Harries, a former missionary of the U.M.C.A., now lecturer in the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London. This book would seem at first sight to have only a local interest, but it clearly sets forth the reasons which attract the African pagan to Islam. The simplicity of the writing should make it a best seller, and it is a "must" for every Christian anxious about Africa's future.

These three are books which convey technical and factual information to the reader. There is a fourth book of a different kind,

but with a greater human interest which shows how Islam met what one man thought was his greatest spiritual need. The title of the book is "The Road to Mecca"; the author, whose Moslem name is Muhammad Asad, was an Austrian Jew. Too young to fight in the first World War, he survived the holocaust to find himself in a world without meaning, without shape, without hope. Amid the disintegration of society which was characteristic of central Europe in the early "twenties" his most desperate need was to find a stable community in which he could feel that he really "belonged", a community which offered some real meaning for life. The Jewish environment in which he had grown up was riddled with unbelief, "holding the form of religion but denying the power of it". He looked towards Christianity, but the Christianity with which he came in contact seemed to have divorced religion from life and to be wholly preoccupied with individual salvation. He never met the Church in the form of a vital fellowship in which men and women believed in Christ as Lord of the here and now. It seemed to him that "Western man had, over the centuries, lost all his real faith in Christianity: with the loss of this faith, he had lost the conviction that the universe was the expression of one Planning Mind and thus formed one organic whole; and because he had lost this conviction, he was now living in a spiritual and moral vacuum". An invitation to visit a relative in Jerusalem introduced him to the House of Islam, the Moslem way of life captured his imagination, and his steps turned towards Mecca. "It seemed to me that for the first time I had come across a community in which kinship between man and man was not due to accidents of common racial or economic interest but to something far deeper and far more stable: a kinship of a common outlook which lifted all the barriers of loneliness between man and man".

This book is the record of a soul's pilgrimage, and should be treated with the respect that sincerity always deserves. It does demonstrate the appeal of Islam to a lonely, rootless European. It does remind us that in our present world the point of spiritual contact with multitudes is the deeply felt need for "belonging" to a community. But in addition to setting forth his unfortunate experiences with Western Christianity Muhammad Asad is apprehensive about the forces now threatening Islam. "Under the impact of Western cultural influences, the souls of many Muslims, men and women, are slowly shrivelling. They are letting themselves be led away from their erstwhile belief that an improvement in living standards should be but a means to improving man's spiritual perceptions; they are falling into the same idolatry of progress into

which the Western world fell after it had reduced religion to a mere melodious tinkling somewhere in the background of happening; and are therefore growing smaller in stature, not greater". The thoughtful Christian, well aware of the erosion of soul in the West, must feel sympathy for Muhammad Asad and anxiety for the House of Islam in its peril. Not to feel such sympathy and such anxiety is to disqualify yourself for ever from being able to "meet" with Moslems and invite them to meet with Jesus Christ and walk His road to the City of God.

If sympathy is one of the two essential qualities, the other is humility. Here we may approach the question from another angle with Professor L.E.Browne, an English theologian who has specialized in the field of Islamic studies. He points out in his book — "The Quickening Word — a Theological Answer to the Challenge of Islam" — that Islam remains a standing rebuke to the unwillingness, or the unreadiness, of Christians to interpret their faith in language which can be understood by those who start from different premises. He points out that we must humbly admit that the position of non-Christians in our own country is not really very different from that of the Moslem, particularly of the Moslem who, under the fierce pressure of the contemporary world, is slowly abandoning his faith even while he still respects its outward forms. In a word, the problem of convincing the thoughtful Moslem of the truth of the Christian faith is hardly, if at all, different from that of convincing a great many of our fellowcountrymen. The "fog" in the mind of the Moslem is not due to the fact that he is the benighted heir of an inferior culture; it is the same "fog" which infests the minds of many of our friends, wisps of which may sometimes cloud our own minds! It is a valuable experience in humility to realize that the Moslem's outlook approximates to the outlook of many who are Christian in name only.

Commenting on Trimingham's "Islam in West Africa", a veteran C.M.S. missionary, who has worked in the Middle East for more than forty years, stresses the need for a genuine "meeting" between Moslems and Christians. "We must not think and speak in terms of the battlefield where we defeat the Moslem, but in terms of friendship where we meet him and win him for Christ... We must approach this in a humble and contrite spirit, realizing that Islam is the scene of the Church's greatest failure in the past and its greatest challenge at the present time... The Moslem needs to be shown that the Christian has a more satisfying answer to the many problems of life and thought... No really adequate presentation

of the Gospel has been made with the Moslem in view for a long time, and in the context of today's problem".

But this "meeting" of any Christian with any Moslem is by no means easy to arrange. There are many obstacles. Neither, for instance, can enter on such an encounter untrammelled by a heritage of misunderstandings, in which political and economic and religious elements are all mixed up. As we have already said, Christianity has been for centuries identified by the Moslem with the aggressive political activities of European powers. The Moslem is no fool; he does not fail to notice that organizations for the dissemination of British or American culture in the Middle East belittle to the point of ignoring everything distinctively Christian in history. He may listen to the B.B.C. broadcasting Arabic readings from the Koran, and he notices that it rarely broadcasts Christian Services in Arabic. There is the type of Briton or American who imagines in his folly that he is paying respect to the religious susceptibilities of Moslems by pretending that he has none of his own. This makes the Moslem more suspicious than ever. The foreigner in his midst is either godless or he is playing a double game. In either case he is not to be trusted. The whole tone of Christian writing about Moslems needs to be reviewed. We should do well to banish the word "crusade" from our vocabulary, both religious and secular. There might be more than a symbolic value in such an act of penitence. Every time we are tempted to make some caustic expression of contempt about fellow-Christians from whom we happen to differ, let us remember that we are thereby making our own small deliberate contribution towards stopping some Moslem from stepping out of the brotherhood of Islam into the fragmented Body of Christ.

The way of service provides a means whereby Christian and Moslem may meet—devoted service of the kind sponsored by the Refugees Department of the World Council of Churches. This has happened in recent years. Blankets and clothes and food—cups of cold water in many forms—have been given in the name of Christ. No one can even begin to estimate into how many hearts a way has been opened by this loving service. Next comes the way of understanding. There is a great deal of misunderstanding to be overcome, and, as Professor Browne well points out, if words can be used as means of communication, they can also be used to conceal our thoughts. Here is a field where scholars have much to do, and it must not be a merely academic exercise. We have had our Islamic experts in the past, we have them today; but the Moslem tends to regard such interest as a menace. As Kenneth Cragg

well says, "the longstanding and persistent Muslim inhospitality to genuine Christian contacts has been one of the great spiritual calamities of our time". Scholarly contacts are all very well in their way, but as long as such writing "evades the demands of religious relationship, it remains a study about Islam, not a meeting of mind with Muslims". It was with this difficulty in view that the Conference of the Near East Christian Council recommended the setting up of a Study Centre where men and women could learn what the ordinary man or woman in the Moslem world is thinking today.

The way of service, the way of understanding, and thirdly the way of personal encounter. This is of immense importance, for this is the level at which service is supplemented by the word of interpretation which reveals the Person behind the service. It is also the level at which the fruits of scholarship can be reaped in the experience of the man in the street. Here we have an added difficulty; we must make a clear distinction between two words which are often confused—Evangelism and Proselytism. Let us be quite honest with ourselves. Is it evangelism when converts come forward in answer to what we consider to be the right approach, and proselytism when we consider dubious methods are being employed ? Is it evangelism when we attract somebody to our own Church, but proselytism when somebody is drawn away from our Church ? It is probably true to say that proselytism is the endeavour to get men to join our party because it is ours, while evangelism is the effort to bring men to the feet of our Divine Master, leaving it to Him to tell them which party they should join.

But we must remember all the time that Christians and Moslems do not meet in a vacuum. A good deal of thinking in Christian circles proceeds on the tacit assumption that both Christianity and Islam, as we know them, are constants. There is, on the contrary, good reason to think that the dynamic forces at work in the history of our time will serve to modify very profoundly both organized Christianity and Islam as we know them. It has still to be seen whether Islam contains within itself the resources necessary to defeat the tremendous attack which secularist materialism in one form or another is launching upon it. Such measures as arranging a meeting of the Arab League at the time of the Mecca Pilgrimage are only political expedients and temporary stopgaps. Above all, every Christian must remember that it is sheer irresponsibility if, after having convinced a Moslem that he must become a Christian—and he then finds himself "in the street" with

the door of his old home slammed behind him—we leave him there with no other home to offer him. He wants to "belong" and in Islam he had at least some experience of a brotherhood!

The books mentioned in this article have precipitated a debate which will last for a long time to come. We can only pray that with the guidance of God it may result in positive action. The immediate need in respect to the "meeting" of Christians and Moslems is not so much a quantitative increase in numbers as a qualitative improvement in approach. To that goal every prayer and every effort should be directed. We append a list of the books mentioned in this article:—

Islam, by Alfred Guillaume—Penguin Books A 311, 1954—2/—
Middle East Survey, by S.A. Morrison—Student Christian Movement Press, 1954—12/6 (This book is on sale in some countries of the Middle East with the title "Middle East Tensions")
Islam in East Africa, by Lyndon P. Harries—Universities' Mission to Central Africa, 1954—5/—
The Road to Mecca, by Muhammad Asad—Max Reinhardt, London, 1954—21/—
The Quickening Word—a Theological Answer to the Challenge of Islam, by Laurence E. Browne—Heffer, Cambridge, 1955—10/6

"IN GIVING HIM FOOD AND RAIMENT' '

The Report of the N.E.C.C. Committee for Refugee Work was eagerly awaited at the recent Conference and was presented with a wealth of interesting detail by the Executive Secretary, Willard Jones. This brief article cannot hope to give all the information contained in the report and must of necessity be only a short summary presenting the salient facts of the present situation. From the report three facts emerge to which every sincere Christian must pay prayerful attention. First, no political solution of the refugee problem is at present in sight. Secondly, the problem is becoming greater rather than less with the present birth-rate in the camps of approximately 22,000 every year. Thirdly, there is the staggering fact that half of the refugees are children under fifteen years of age, many of whom have no living memory except their experiences as refugees; they have known no other life. Our Committee gives help without reference to the religion, church affiliation or racial origin of the recipient, and the record of faithful stewardship is an impressive one.

During the year 1954 the Treasurer received 226,229.94 dollars in cash contributions towards the Budget; goods in kind—clothing, foods, medicines, etc.—weighing 1,405,387 lbs. and valued at 805,905.55 dollars were received, making a grand total of 1,032,135.49 dollars. This the report describes as "a remarkable outpouring of Christian charity". How has the money been spent? This is best explained by giving a short report on the activities supervised by our Committee:—

1. *Clothing.*

The annual report by the Director of U.N.R.W.A. for 1954 pays this tribute—"One of the most important and indispensable contributions of the Voluntary Agencies is the provision of clothing for the refugees. It has not so far been possible to stretch U.N.R.W.A.'s limited relief budget to cover this requirement, and without the help of the Voluntary Agencies many of the refugees would now, after six years away from their homes, possess not one stitch of clothing. U.N.R.W.A. pays ocean and inland freight on all clothing imported into the host countries for distribution to the refugees, and has expended over 260,000 dollars for this purpose during the past year". The Committee feels that, in addition to the very useful bales of clothing, cloth or thread for weaving cloth should be provided to enable the refugees to make up their own garments. It is hoped that textile factories may be persuaded to make gifts of this kind. There is a very interesting pilot scheme at Nablus where the refugees are taught to weave and make good cloth for the children's school uniforms. There is also grave anxiety about footwear. The soil in some of the camps is infected with hookworm and shoes are badly needed to protect the children from this scourge. Moreover, the medical authorities find that foot sores do not heal because the children must go barefoot even in winter. Sturdy sandals can be made for one dollar, good shoes for two dollars, but half a million dollars would be required to supply all the footwear required.

2. *Foodstuffs.*

The regular refugee rations have not greatly changed in 1954, but there has been a distinct improvement in the U.N.R.W.A. programme of providing supplementary foods for undernourished children, expectant mothers and convalescent cases. The Government of the U.S.A. has made bilateral agreements with Jordan and Egypt whereby surplus commodities will be brought in by

American Voluntary Agencies and distributed to needy people, both refugees and non-refugees. This is particularly important in Egypt where about 10,000 Palestinians took refuge; they are in great need as they are not officially recognized as coming under the care of U.N.R.W.A. This programme of relief is developing satisfactorily, but creates a demand for markedly increased funds. In Jordan this year no rain fell from January 1st. to March 15th; this resulted in a serious crop failure, and the bilateral agreement with the U.S.A. will help to meet the emergency. Quantities of food have been shipped to Aqaba, Jordan's only seaport.

3. *Medicines and Vitamins.*

Owing to the cumulative effect over a period of undernourishment and exposure increased sums will be needed for medical care. The area committees are never able to meet all the demands for hospital treatment, assistance with mental cases, emergency operations, care of teeth, etc.

4. *Discretionary Fund.*

This fund has been used by the Committee to meet emergency calls—hospitalization of critical cases, treatment for cancer, provision of the more expensive drugs, operations to restore sight, etc. Such a fund meets a real need and contributions to it are warmly welcomed.

5. *Teacher Training.*

The Lebanon Committee held a training course for their 37 teachers. This was a very successful venture. In Jordan the Committee co-operated with the Education Department of U.N.R.W.A. by paying the expenses of fourteen teachers who attended a summer school. In both cases lectures were given on the theory and practice of teaching and possible techniques; after this they conducted classes under expert supervision. It has been said that it is better to put the right spirit into a hundred teachers than to open a hundred schools. However, the liability of our Committee in this respect may be reduced as U.N.R.W.A. is allocating seven million dollars to an expanded programme of education.

6. *Loans.*

After some years of experiment and successful experience it has been found that the granting of small loans without interest charges

is one of the best ways of helping the refugees to help themselves. By this means many refugees have been enabled to start up in business and make themselves useful to the community. In the vast majority of cases the money lent is loyally repaid. The great variety of work undertaken is shown by the following very abbreviated list:— Banana Grower, Woodcarver, Poultry Farmer, Photographer, Macaroni Maker, Charcoal Seller, Goldsmith; Bookshop Owner, Cement Block Maker. Many loans have been granted for the purchase of sewing machines. Small farmers have been helped to improve their land, to buy a pump for irrigation or an animal for ploughing. Thus the refugee is protected from the professional money-lender with his exorbitant rates of interest, and initiative is encouraged.

7. *Rehabilitation.*

This fund is used for agricultural development and to promote co-operative enterprise among the refugees. Government land can be rented, arid land reclaimed, water brought in for irrigation. Thus a livelihood can be provided for groups of refugees and their names removed from the ration rolls. In these schemes the Committee is keeping in close touch with Point IV and is prepared to investigate any possibility.

8. *Social Welfare.*

"Man does not live by bread alone". He is a social being and should be engaged in purposeful group activity. At present this need is not being met adequately and constitutes a real challenge to the Christian bodies interested in refugee work. A conference of Social Welfare Workers was held in Ramallah, but the workers work at a disadvantage; there can of necessity be no leisurely diagnosis of individual problems with careful recommendations followed up by frequent visits. They are overwhelmed by sheer numbers and must find new techniques for their task. "Self-help" projects are in the forefront of this programme. There are many needs that must be met. Among them is the completion of the survey of the Palestinian refugees stranded in Egypt, the organization of youth work to check the increase of juvenile delinquency (not surprising in view of the bad living conditions), help for the old people who, though welcomed and respected in normal Arab home conditions, find themselves unwanted in the camps, the education of deaf and dumb children (one charitable organization alone had to reject 80 applicants).

9. *Frontier Villages and Economic Refugees.*

It is due to the efforts of the Voluntary Agencies that the West has been made aware of the injustices and absurdities of the long truce demarcation line between Israel and Jordan. Jordanian villagers living near this line in very many cases lost all their productive land though they retained their homes. As they had not lost their homes, they were not eligible for help from U.N.R.W.A. But their livelihood was gone; whenever these villagers on the border infiltrate a few yards into Israel to gather fruit from trees they themselves have planted they are fired on or captured and given long prison sentences. An outstanding example of this injustice is Qalqilya; the population has been swollen by a refugee influx, but they have now only 7,000 dunams of land as compared with the 50,000 dunams which they held previously.

The N.E.C.C. has Area Committees whose members are in the main the resident Christian workers in the various districts. There has been excellent co-operation between the Central Committee and the Area Committees and a remarkable degree of unity has been achieved. Widely separated groups have worked together constructively and efficiently in times of desperate need. As the local conditions in the various areas are rather different and present different problems to be solved, a brief summary is appended under "area headings":—

1. EGYPT. *Estimates of the number of refugees vary from* 10,000 *to* 12,000.

These refugees came to the country without claiming refugee status because to do so would have meant immediate transfer to the Gaza strip where all refugees seeking shelter in Egypt were supposed to go. In consequence they are not registered and they have no ration cards; they have received no help from U.N.R.W.A., and little help from the Government until recently when the Egyptian Department of Palestine Affairs and the Department of Social Welfare began to interest themselves in their needs. The few who have found business opportunities are now well-to-do. Many more have found work and earn a simple livelihood for their families. But thousands are utterly destitute and in a pitiable condition, struggling to survive in the slums of Cairo. The Egypt Inter-Mission Council and the N.E.C.C. Area Committee have helped some of the most desperate cases, but their budget is wholly inadequate to give much relief. The first shipments of

the U.S. surplus foods have been distributed in Cairo, and it is hoped to save them from starving. There is urgent need for a full-time paid worker, an increase in the budget, and the rental of a building to serve as a centre.

2. SYRIA. 86,000 *Refugees.*

These refugees are directly supervised by the Palestinian Arab Refugee Institution, and U.N.R.W.A. is guided by its recommendations. The Lutheran World Federation is the chief Voluntary Agency working in Syria.

3. LEBANON. 101,636 *Refugees.*

These refugees constitute only 7.5 per cent of the total population of the Lebanon, but the uneasy balance between the Christian and Moslem communities makes it unlikely that they would ever be welcomed as permanent residents. It is possible that their absorption might create an unemployment problem. The Area Committee has been responsible for seven elementary schools, but the expansion of U.N.R.W.A.'s work in this field means that four of them can be handed over. There will be greater concentration on the three remaining schools, especially in respect of vocational training. Pupils are taught Arabic, English and arithmetic, there are classes in sewing and handicrafts, evening classes in such varied subjects as home economics, typing, shorthand and radio mechanics.

4. ISRAEL.

The Arabs in Israel do not have the status of refugees, but many of them have been uprooted from their homes. It is reliably reported that there is a tendency to treat them as second-class citizens, and they stand in great need of sympathetic help from Christian organizations. The Christian Voluntary Agencies working in Israel are providing for their educational and medical needs, and doing their best to help with recreational and cultural programmes.

5. GAZA. 207,034 *Refugees.*

In Gaza 207,034 refugees and about 100,000 local residents are jammed into an area of 195 square miles, much of it a sandy waste. The passage of time brings little hope of a poli-

tical solution of their problem; in fact, the reverse is true, for each new clash and counter-clash serves only to increase the tension. It is a convincing demonstration of the futility of a mad lust for revenge. U.N.R.W.A. has, however, erected cement-brick huts for all in the camps, so that they are no longer compelled to live in tents, easily blown down in winter storms and only a poor shelter from the summer sun. There has been some attempt at town-planning, the huts being built around a mosque, a clinic, a school and a social centre. So there is some suggestion of a community life. It is in this area more than any other that the N.E.C.C. Committee has made loans to set men up in trade; there have been 164 such loans and the rate of repayment is better than the average. A trained agriculturist is supervising bee-keeping and tree nurseries. He is hoping to extend the latter and give guidance in reclaiming land. It has been found that it is only a relatively thin layer of sand that in places covers quite good clay soil. If trees can be planted to push back the desert, considerable areas, now waste land, could be cultivated. The corner-stone of the N.E.C.C.-Y.M.C.A. Welfare Centre was laid on November 17th , 1954, in the presence of officials of U.N.R.W.A. and the Egyptian Government. The centre is located on a site easily accessible from the town and the neighbouring camps. If there is no delay in the provision of the necessary building materials, the Centre should be ready for use in the course of this year.

6. EAST JORDAN. 146,261 *Refugees*.

Recent census estimates reveal a noticeable shift in population, both refugee and non-refugee, from the west to the east bank of the River Jordan; certainly there are 14,208 more refugees in 1955 than in 1954. N.E.C.C. has teams doing social welfare work in Irbid and Amman. They are busily engaged in handling small loans, family visiting and the distribution of relief. There is the closest co-operation with the C.M.S. Centre in Zerka, where there has been successful pioneering in housing, handcrafts and other schemes for rehabilitation. Education is only provided in places where U.N.R.W.A. schools do not meet the need.

7. WEST JORDAN. 351,243 *Refugees*.

In this area 351,243 refugees and 500,000 local residents

live in an area of about 2,170 square miles; the rest of the Holy Land, now cut off from Jordan by the truce demarcation line, contains about 7,975 square miles, and only 7.23 per cent of this land was owned by the Zionists at the end of the British Mandate. The Area Committee has been fortunate in having the free use of facilities provided by local Christian organizations. Storerooms, office assistance, school buildings, sewing centres and rooms for meetings have been provided, and this has substantially reduced the costs of administration. This Committee has to deal with the largest concentration of refugees in the Near East, and there is the additional problem of the frontier villages where thousands of people have kept their houses, but lost their land and therefore their livelihood. For purposes of administration West Jordan is divided into three areas—Hebron, Samaria and Central. In the first two the teams are headed by international personnel, but in the Central area most of the relief work is carried out by members of existing Christian organizations.

A. *The Hebron Area* reports little improvement in economic conditions. Many farmers are struggling to exist on a mere fraction of their former income because they have lost farmlands and pastures. Their water supply is hopelessly inadequate because many of the best springs are in Israeli territory. There is unemployment in Hebron and in the villages. It is a pitiful story of ill-clad; undernourished children and hopelessly overcrowded living conditions. There are three milk centres, four feeding centres which serve a cooked meal to 1330 persons five times a week; and an infant feeding centre for undernourished babies. Loans of seed wheat have been made to farmers, and some 10,890 vines and 1,046 fruit trees have been given to the frontier villages to replace their lost vineyards and orchards. A needlework centre employs peasant women to do work which finds a ready market in the U.S.A.

B. *The Samaria Area* has a team working over about 4,000 square kilometres among villagers, townsmen and bedouin tribes. Four clinics received 63,927 visits from out-patients last year, and a fifth has been opened in a village near Beisan. The team co-operates with the Arab Women's League in maintaining a community centre where 102 young girls are taking classes in Arabic, arithmetic and hygiene. Clothing was distributed to some 25,457 people in 1954. Vocational training is an important activity; young men have been taught to weave and now

turn out quantities of cotton cloth for school uniforms. Eighteen apprentices have been given grants while they learn trades. Houses have been provided with wooden doors and windows to make them habitable.

C. In the *Central Area*, where the work is in the main carried on by Christian organizations; grants are made to these organizations to enable them to carry out their very extensive programme. Orphans are cared for, scholarships given, medical treatment supplied, and clothing distributed. The Ramallah Refugee Schools have completed their sixth year with 560 children enrolled; there is a sewing centre and a class in dressmaking which has been responsible for supplying hundreds of garments for the children to wear. The Anglican Bishopric's most ambitious project has been the building of new villages; four villages have been built in the Bethany area, and sites have been chosen for another two. The N.E.C.C. has been especially interested in a self-help scheme organized by the Y.M.C.A. which works in Jerusalem and Jericho. The prospect of returning to the splendidly equipped Y.M.C.A. building in Jerusalem has become increasingly remote, and so a house was restored and adapted on the Arab side of the city. Here there are 172 young men enrolled in evening classes, and the social and physical training facilities are used to the utmost. The Y.M.C.A. also runs a trade school in Jericho with 48 enrolled in classes for carpentry, blacksmithing, welding and tailoring. They make beautiful furniture which is readily sold in Jerusalem—so much so that the boys are unable to keep up with the demand. They also do wrought iron work of good design and workmanship.

"Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy". The above is a necessarily incomplete summary of the situation as it is at present. Organization and administration are only the skeleton, the bare bones; it is Christian charity and devoted service that brings the body to life. On the credit side we have the loyal co-operation of Christian bodies too numerous to mention here, perseverance in the face of many difficulties and disappointments, a God-guided inspiration in devising new means of meeting a critical situation. On the debit side the Director of U.N.R.W.A. reports a waning interest in the Refugee Problem in the West; we can only hope and pray that interest will be maintained and generous help continued until a political solution is found and those in the camps are restored to productive occupations and a normal way of life. But our present dangers are very

real. There is the danger that statesmen, after many unsuccessful attempts, will shrug their shoulders, acquiesce in the present appalling situation and regard the problem as incapable of solution. There is the danger of there being created in the camps a "refugee mentality" from which men and women can no longer be aroused to make efforts for themselves on their own initiative. This danger becomes greater as the years pass. But these are not mere statistics and a number of case histories in an office file; this report represents a sum total of abject human misery that should prick the conscience of all, Christian and Moslem alike. Once again, 22,000 babies born in the camps every year, and half the refugee population under fifteen years of age! "Come over into Macedonia, and help us!"

IN THE SUDAN

The Prime Minister in his broadcast message on Christmas Day said:— "It is a matter of special satisfaction to me to address myself to the Christian population of this country, both Sudanese and foreign residents. ...I would take the opportunity to assure my Christian brethren that the Government of which I have the honour to be head is determined to uphold the best democratic traditions of ensuring and protecting freedom of belief and worship." At Juba, on February 12th., the Governor had announced that during the celebrations there would be a reading from the Koran. The young Christian Assistant District Commissioner claimed that there should also be a reading from the Bible. The Governor agreed, and so for the first time in Sudanese history a Christian Sudanese Priest was able, at an official ceremony, to read from the Bible and follow the reading with a prayer for the Government and country which was heartily applauded.

People are beginning to discover that a life full of gadgets is not a satisfactory substitute for a life lived in the presence of God. Materialism can make life more comfortable for the moment. But the moment is horrifyingly brief. Hungry and thirsty, the souls of men are fainting in them, for lack of the old assurance of an immortal destiny, the old reliance on a power which can bring them through darkness to an eternal day—"The Church Times."

Well, my bringing up was pretty conventional,
I had always been taught to disbelieve in sin.
Oh, I don't mean that it was ever mentioned!
But anything wrong, from our point of view,
Was either bad form, or was psychological.
A Young Woman in T.S.Eliot's "Cocktail Party"

THE ANCIENT CHURCHES OF THE EAST

(This article is compiled from information supplied by Canon Edward Every of St. George's Cathedral, Jerusalem).

At the recent Conference of the Near East Christian Council the members as usual appointed or reappointed Correspondents to deal with the various subjects that are of paramount importance to the Council, but there was one noticeable omission. No Correspondent was appointed to deal with "Relations with the Ancient Churches". These are days in which we may thank God that we have shown, and are showing, a greater desire for reunion, fellowship and co-operation; with a greater knowledge of the Ancient Churches there has grown up in the hearts of Christians a sympathetic understanding of their historical background and their present problems. So far are we from appointing a Correspondent to deal with "Relations with the Ancient Churches" that we feel that the Near East Christian Council will not be completely representative of Christian opinion until all the Ancient Churches send their delegates to join us in our deliberations. If they are not officially represented in the Council, there is every reason for concern and every effort should be made to remove any obstacle.

The Ancient Churches of the East who are members of the World Council of Churches have clearly shown their willingness to co-operate with other Christian Churches and Missions. All four Patriarchates of the Eastern Orthodox Church in the Near East, together with the Orthodox Churches of Cyprus and Greece, are members of the World Council of Churches. The same is true of the Assyrian Church, the Coptic Church and the Ethiopian Church. The Armenian Gregorian Church is not yet a member of the World Council, but has for long participated in the Oecumenical Movement; there have also been contacts with the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch. There were strong delegations at Evanston from many of these Ancient Churches, and there was held in Beirut immediately prior to the Meeting of the N.E.C.C. a conference of representatives of Christian Youth Organizations in the Near East, under the auspices of the Youth Department of the World Council, at which the Ancient Churches were well represented. These are encouraging indications of the readiness of the Eastern Churches to co-operate.

The Department of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the World Council has been working vigorously in the Near East for the past ten years. In 1951 a special Committee on Inter-

Church Aid for the countries affected by the situation in Palestine was set up to advise and aid Headquarters in Geneva. Large grants have been made to the Seminaries of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Jerusalem, in the Lebanon and in Greece. Aid has been given towards the expenses of the schools of the Armenian, Coptic and Syrian Orthodox Churches, both in Jordan and in the Lebanon. Many Orthodox students have received scholarships and have been trained in Western Universities. The money for this has come largely from the Churches of the New World. Nor is this a one-way traffic; there are at the present moment in the Armenian Orthodox Seminary at Antelias near Beirut three students who have been sent by their Church from the U.S.A. to the Near East to complete their training.

The Eastern Churches, moreover, have been playing their part in the relief of Refugees. A few examples out of many must suffice. The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem houses within its compound five hundred families—about 3,000 persons—who have lived rent free since they took shelter there in 1948. The Armenians in Jerusalem also give scholarships for both elementary and secondary school pupils. The Coptic Church has 266 refugees in the elementary school and 45 in their secondary school; this Church has been impoverished by the fact of much of their property being in Israeli territory and the decrease in the number of pilgrims, but they are playing their part. The Orthodox Patriarchate also accepts refugee children in the schools free and has granted the use of its premises for a soup kitchen where 350 children receive one meal a day. Many refugees are accommodated in the various monasteries of the Patriarchate. The Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch has given cash grants, powdered milk, medical assistance, educational services and scholarships. The Syrian Orthodox Churches of Jordan and the Lebanon have also played their part in this Christian work. Faced with great difficulties in Jordan through unemployment and bad economic conditions, they have received money from members of their community living in America and used it for relief and education. In the Lebanon they care for orphans and provide educational facilities. This work is done by the Eastern Churches for their own people. The proof that they do not rely entirely on help from the West lies in the fact that the N.E.C.C. Committee for Refugee Work estimates the value of this work at 63,650 dollars.

For more than thirty years the Anglican Bishopric in Jerusalem has kept on its staff a priest whose duty it is to study the Ancient

Churches and help them, especially in their educational work. Canon Edward Every, who holds that position at present, gives lessons in the schools of the Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox and Syrian Orthodox Churches in Jerusalem. This is in addition to help given to their village schools and philanthropic societies. The American Episcopalian Chaplain in Beirut has been lecturing at the Armenian Orthodox Seminary at Antelias. It is the policy of the Anglican Communion to be a "Mission of Help" to the Eastern Churches. The Anglican Church appeals to the common tradition of Christendom before the separation of East from West, the ancient Fathers and the Oecumenical Councils when she defends her own doctrinal position. She claims to be separated from the Eastern Orthodox Churches by history rather than any doctrinal issues. It is an undeniable fact that the Anglican Church is a "Bridge Church" between the Ancient Churches and the Reformed Churches of the West; as such, she is prepared to attempt the task of mediation, and thus make a positive contribution to the cause of increased co-operation and ultimate reunion.

But there are immediate problems that must be faced at once. It is a pretty general experience in schools maintained by the Protestant Churches and Missions that it is becoming increasingly difficult to give religious lessons to Moslem pupils. Whether we like it or not, a very large proportion of the Christian pupils are members of the Ancient Churches, and the majority are likely to remain so. This situation presents us with a challenge, an opportunity and a grave Christian responsibility. It is our duty to see that after they leave school they play an active and enlightened part in the life of the particular Church to which they belong. It is therefore essential that they should be well taught about the history, the forms of worship and the doctrines of the Churches to which they belong and in which they have been baptized. It is only with such knowledge that they will be fitted to be intelligent members of the various Churches and realise the possibilities of progress. Such teaching should ideally be given to them by qualified teachers of their own Churches, but this is not always practicable. A considerable amount of literature about the Eastern Churches exists in English as well as in Arabic, and it can be studied by all those who teach them. The older children must be made aware that the Churches to which they belong are being studied with interest and sympathy by Christians of the West, and that the history of their Churches is an important part of the history of Christendom. From time to time it might be possible to join them in worship. They must be encouraged to join any Youth Movement or Scout

Troop connected with their own Church. It is not enough to refrain from "Proselytism"; that is a merely negative policy. With the present emphasis on education in the Near East we are challenged to bring up in our schools a new generation of Christians who feel that they and their own Church have a definite contribution to make to Christian thought. Thus and only thus will the old quarrels be forgotten and there will grow up a new spirit of understanding and sympathetic co-operation.

This may seem a very difficult task, but we must not be daunted. The Ancient Churches of the East represent the majority of Christians in these lands. There are many encouraging signs. The "Mouvement de la Jeunesse Orthodoxe" is a great and important fact in the local situation, and we should be in close touch with its leaders. In Greece the Orthodox Christian Movements among students and intellectuals and professional men are of such strength that they will undoubtedly shape the future of Christianity among the Greeks. There is no one of the Ancient Churches which is not trying to play its part, sometimes in very difficult circumstances, in the work of education.

We are also faced with a new problem in the field of Christian literature. The policy of the literature department of the N.E.C.C. is at present undenominational. But our present misunderstandings of the historical and doctrinal positions of the Ancient Churches are largely due to ignorance. We have decided to participate in the Oecumenical Movement of the 20th century; that decision implies a readiness to understand, and help others to understand, doctrinal and liturgical standpoints in Christendom from which we differ. The possibility must be considered of producing Arabic Christian literature which would give a proper account of the Christian Churches of the Near East, their history, their saints; their forms of worship, their techniques of prayer and the spiritual life, described intelligently from within by their own members and written from their own point of view. It is only by the dissemination of accurate knowledge that we shall be able to dispel the mists of ignorance and avoid misunderstandings of the kind that have caused no little bitterness in the past.

If you visit El Miriamiya Church in Damascus—it lies just behind the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchate in the Street called Straight—you will be shown an ancient icon obviously charred and burnt by fire. It was salvaged when the old Church was burnt down in the Christian massacres of 1860. That icon may serve as a parable. The ancient Churches of the East have a long roll of

martyrs and a record of suffering and persecution that no Western Church can equal. But, like the icon, they still survive; and under the guidance of God they have a part to play in the Christian life of the Near East. There are signs of a very real spiritual awakening to which we of the West can make our contribution. From the practical point of view is it not a sign of the times that the Churches entitled to privileges in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem have at long last reached a working agreement to repair the Church and co-operate in the work? And is this not also a parable?

THE LUTHERAN HOUR

The Lutheran Hour can claim proudly to be working in seventy-five countries, in sixty-five languages, and in over twelve hundred stations. Carl F. Agerstrand, the Director of the Near East Branch, reports that in addition to the broadcasting schedules there is a total enrolment of 5,025 students in their Correspondence Courses—"The Life of Christ" and "The Life of St. Paul and his New Testament Epistles." These courses are free for anyone and the students are from Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. They are given in both Arabic and English. More than four hundred students have already completed their courses and have received their diplomas. The Bible Class organized by the Lutheran Hour is large and still growing; among the recent and visible results is the change of life of a former prisoner who is now doing evangelistic work. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

It was the night of the Church Missionary Society's Rally at the Empress Hall in London. The puzzled policeman on point duty said, "What surprises me is that such a crowd of people should turn up to a religious meeting." "It looks as though there must be something in Christianity after all, doesn't it?" replied a member of the C.M.S. staff as the crowds continued to roll in.

"The training of leaders is evangelism by multiplication, rather than by addition"—John R. Mott.

"The parable of the wheat and the tares was the first authoritative pronouncement on tolerance that the world had ever heard"—Field Marshal Smuts.

"EACH ONE TEACH ONE"

(Compiled from information supplied by Tanious Zakhary and Habib Said).

Silently, and sometimes almost unnoticed, the propaganda struggle for the minds and souls of men goes on. Modern methods are being used; the radio and the cinema are playing their part where facilities are available, but their effect is often only temporary. It is still the printed word that matters. Hence comes the campaign of the Christian Church—every believer to be literate and able to read his Bible. For Christianity is still the religion of a Book. Wonders have been achieved in this respect in recent years, and millions of adults are learning to read every year. For this, in the Christian world, the Laubach system of "Each one teach one" is very largely responsible. The lesson is given out to the learners, they master it, and before they are given the next lesson they must each of them teach somebody else.

The Laubach Literacy Campaign in Egypt began in 1947 after the visit of Dr. Laubach. The first year's work was preparatory, giving information of the method. Then for the next three years it was applied among the refugees of Gaza, Lebanon and Jordan. Miss H. Mikhail worked as field director until, through illness, she was compelled to rest. In that time 40,000 of the refugees learned to read and write. A new move was made in Egypt in December, 1953. The team consisted of Dr. Davida Finney and Miss Marjorie Dye, with Miss H. Mikhail as field director. Their efforts were concentrated on the village of Hirz in Upper Egypt. Out of a population of about 1,000 there were approximately 250 persons already literate. After six monsths' work 430 of the others were able to read and write. The remainder, about 230 persons, were either too young or too old or refused to learn. It may be that this number would be substantially reduced in a healthier community; disease and debility in many cases would deprive Egyptian fellahin of the necessary intellectual energy.

There were other more abiding results in Hirz besides the ability to read and write. The Church was full every evening, both for worship and for teaching. All those who finished the introductory lessons began to read Laubach's simple "Life of Christ". Many of them after reading the twelve little books on the life of Christ began to read the Bible. The Egypt General Mission co-operated in the campaign, sending a trained nurse and an evangelist to live in the village. The nurse has a clinic whose influence, both physical

and spiritual, extends to 42 neighbouring villages. The evangelist concentrated on work in Sunday Schools in sixteen villages. The local pastor, assisted by Church members, began to teach illiterates in the neighbouring villages, and the spiritual, economic, social and educational improvement was clear for all to see.

After this campaign the team received many requests to work elsewhere. In consequence Menhari was taken as another field, and there again there was enthusiasm, and the campaign was marked by two outstanding features. First, one man made a record and was able to read the Bible almost anywhere after only one month's instruction. Secondly, the people voluntarily undertook to keep the work going after the team had moved to some other place. Meanwhile the technique of the Laubach method was being improved; experts from the Committee of Literacy and Literature in New York came out to Egypt in April, 1954, and worked with about 60 persons for improvement of method and revision of books. In addition, a literacy house was set up in Minia, the purpose of which is to train teachers to teach and writers to write.

But the fight for literacy is only half the battle. We can well imagine the Devil smiling to himself and saying: "Thank you, kind missionaries! You have taught the people to read. I will supply the reading matter." Who is producing most of the reading material for these millions of new readers? Not even the most optimistic estimate could put Christian sources at the top of the list. There is a flood of trashy and Communistic literature which pours over Africa, the Near and Middle East, India and Pakistan and the lands of the Far East, which bodes ill for the future of the world. Christians must ask themselves seriously whether it is possible to take definite action before things deteriorate still further, whether they can forestall rather than bewail the situation. It should be possible to initiate action in the early stages of the moulding of the minds of men.

It is almost impossible to establish a Church which will continue to exist without having Christian literature in the vernacular. The disappearance of the Nestorian Church in China, the early Church in Iran, and the early Church in North Africa was the result, among other causes, of the lack of such literature. On the other hand the Church in Madagascar survived when all the missionaries had left the island because the people were literate and had the Bible in their own tongue. The human agent, guided by the Holy Spirit, is all-important in the mission field, but sometimes Christian literature can penetrate where no person can go; Christian

literature is without those very human failings which afflict even the most energetic of missionaries; it does not get impatient, and it never tires; it does not have to go home for meals or at the end of the day, but is present all the time and ready for use. And God still works wonders through the printed page. In the early days of the American Mission in what was then Syria, Khalil Maghub-ghub was converted, in 1846, because he read a Bible that had been stolen in a Druse raid on a Christian village in the civil war of 1845; he was afterwards pastor at Ain Zehalteh. In 1860 the famous Dr. Thomson prophesied that Christian literature printed at the American Press in Beirut would one day be distributed over 120 degrees of longitude, from Mogador on the Atlantic coast to Pekin in East China. Little can he have thought at the time that this prophecy would be so speedily fulfilled. Fourteen years later this was a fact, for in 1874 orders were received from both Liberia and Pekin.

So the Christian Church in the Near East today is faced with a problem of publication and a problem of distribution. In the matter of distribution the Church sometimes finds helpers in unexpected places. The new Egyptian Government has realised the importance of moral and religious teaching, and insists that such teaching should be given in all schools, Christianity to Christians and Islam to Moslems. With this object in view the Egyptian Government itself has bought large numbers of Bibles from the Bible Society for use by Christians in the Egyptian Army. The report of the Secretary of the Literature Department of the N.E.C.C. for 1954 contains much to encourage us. It is a record of happy co-operation between many societies and Churches. The main work in the Near East is done by the Arabic Christian Literature Committee on which four publishing societies are represented; this is supplemented by the Inter-Church Literature Committee in Iran and the Committee of the Literature Department of the A.B.C.F.M. in Istanbul, Turkey. It is not necessary here to give a list of titles of books published; they range from novels with a religious interest, such as "Quo Vadis" and "The Silver Chalice", to books suitable for theological students, such as "The Historical and Literary Background to the Old Testament". The series which is known as "World Christian Books" is being translated as they appear, and three volumes have already appeared—"Christianity and Science", "The Christian's God" and "Christian Giving". Children's books have been published in Arabic, Turkish and Persian, and more practical matters have not been neglected; two books for peasant farmers, "Care of the Soil" and "Care of Farm

Animals", have been produced in a style that is suitable for those who have only recently learned to read.

The Arabic Christian Literature Committee has recommended the inauguration of an annual Literature Sunday with sermons about the need for Christian Literature, collections to help the work, and books at the back of the Church for inspection and sale. There is also the Fellowship of Christian Writers which came into existence on June 21st, 1954; at the present moment it includes 20 prominent writers in Cairo and 10 in Beirut. Its objects are to encourage and promote friendship among Christian writers, so as to secure a common effort and avoid "overlapping", to defend the Christian truth, to train and encourage young writers, and to study trends of thought in the Near East, especially among the younger generation. The Fellowship has welcomed an invitation to play its part in the translation and publication of "World Christian Books", and at the present time they are studying two manuscripts prepared by a member; these deal with the Trinity and the Incarnation, and are intended for both Christian and Moslem readers.

Reports about the advance of literacy, an increased number of publications, increased sales and the opening of bookshops in various centres are a great encouragement, but every Christian must realise that as yet we are only scratching the surface of the problem. Nature abhors a vacuum; if we teach people to read and then provide nothing for them to read, somebody else will supply books much less desirable. It is a definite fact that in India, Pakistan and elsewhere Communist literature is being sold at well below cost price. The need for an increased supply of Christian and good secular literature is urgent. Dr. Laubach once said, "Now we CAN speak to all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature", but he added that the Church must pay the bill for this, and that it would be a large one—though not as large as will be paid if we fail. "By teaching illiterates to read," said Dr. Laubach on another occasion, "we sought to bless the world. Now, unless the Christian world awakens, we shall wish we had never taught the non-Christian portion to read."

A Poem by Toyohiko Kagawa:—

I read once
In a book
That a man
Called Christ
Went about
Doing good.

It distresses me
That I am
So easily satisfied
With just
Going about.

During a discussion with Studdert-Kennedy, the famous evangelist known to many as "Woodbine Willie," a layman severely criticized the clergy. Studdert-Kennedy listened calmly and acknowledged the justice of some of the criticisms. Before he sat down he added quietly, "You must remember that in finding suitable men for Holy Orders Almighty God has only got the laity to draw from."

A live religion does not offer itself as an object for man's scrutiny, but confronts him with an inexorable demand. That is the issue on which there can be no compromise. At this point the religious and secular views are in irreconcilable conflict.

"I believe it to be true that the normal order of events is inspiration, organization, ossification. We do not want an organization on a national, or even a parochial, scale to ossify the inspiration of the few."

The greatest saint is not the man who does extraordinary things, but the man who does ordinary things extraordinarily well—

St. Francis de Sales.

"It is a constant temptation to us modern Christians to think that size and organization are the test of success, and that good propaganda must reap a harvest of good religion. We so easily forget that God's dealings with men, if measured by our human foot-rules, appear hopelessly inefficient. The Word of God was spoken in a stable; the love of God was measured on a gallows; the mission of God was committed to a handful of nobodies—Tom, Dick and Harry-Peter, Matthew and Thomas—no influence, no money, no qualifications, not even very much faith.

S.P.G. Oversea News.

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